The Conduct of the Parliament of 1784, considered.

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THE

CONDUCT

OF

THE PARLIAMENT OF 1784,

CONSIDERED.

Libenterque his ſum teſtimonio, omnibuſque ero, qui bene de republicâ merentur.

CICERO.

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CONDUCT

OF

THE PARLIAMENT OF 1784,

CONSIDERED.

THE flouriſhing ſtate of Great Britain at the preſent moment, and the general content and happineſs which reigns in every quarter of the kingdom, forms ſo marked a contraſt to that ſcene of diſtreſs and deſpondency, which prevailed previous to the diſſolution of Parliament in 1784, that it cannot fail to make the ſtrongeſt impreſſion on any man, who is either converſant in the public affairs of his country, or even judges of them by their effect on the ſituation, wealth, and happineſs of individuals.

In 1784 our credit was at the loweſt ebb: our expenditure, though in peace, exceeded our annual revenue: our finances were weighed down by an oppreſſive and increaſing load of debt; the country was without a ſingle foreign ally; our commerce, which had ſunk

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under the long interruption it had ſuffered, was ſtill kept down by the low ſtate of public credit, and by the diſpiriting proſpect before us: the affairs of the Eaſt India Company were in a ſtate of embarraſſment, which rendered their ſituation in the utmoſt degree critical: and, to complete the whole, the country was ſo diſtracted by factions, that it ſcarcely ſeemed poſſible to form any ſettled government, to whom the people could look up with confidence for any relief from ſuch a complication of difficulties.

The reverſe in 1790 is ſo extraordinary, conſidering the ſhort ſpace of time which has intervened, that we ſhould almoſt doubt the reality of our former diſtreſſes, if the hiſtory of what has paſſed ſince the meeting of the Parliament of 1784, did not furniſh us with cauſes fully adequate to the happy effects, which we have experienced, in ſo ſpeedy a tranſition from the brink of ruin to an enviable pitch of national proſperity.

In order fully to recollect our ſituation at the melancholy period here alluded to, it is neceſſary to take a view of the circumſtances which preceded the diſſolution of the former Parliament. The repugnance which the country ſhewed in the ſpring of 1782 to the continuance

nuance of the American war, and the general opinion of miſconduct in its proſecution, having driven Lord North from the helm, he was ſucceeded by an adminiſtration compoſed of a variety of jarring intereſts, which had been kept together more by the circumſtance of having one common enemy, than by mutual confidence, or uniformity of principle. Their differences were, however, confined to the cabinet; nor did any open rupture appear, till, upon the death of the Marquis of Rockingham then firſt Lord of the Treaſury, a ſtruggle took place for the nomination of his ſucceſſor.

The events, which followed, are too freſh in the minds of every one to need any thing more than a bare recapitulation.

Lord Shelburne being appointed to the head of the Treaſury, Mr. Fox and his immediate connections reſigned their offices: and after having but a few months before dwelt with peculiar energy on the diſtreſſed ſituation of the country, which Mr. Fox even ſtated in the Houſe of Commons, when a cabinet miniſter, as worſe than he had ever repreſented it in oppoſition, erected a ſtandard for the declared purpoſe of embarraſſing and thwarting thoſe, in whoſe hands the King had committed

the adminiſtration of his diſtracted kingdoms.

Lord Shelburne had ſcarce been in office ſix months, before he accompliſhed that object for which, in the opinion of Mr. Fox, even the unconditional ſacrifice of acknowledging American independence, prior to any negociation, was to be made without any heſitation. He effected a treaty of peace with the four ſeveral powers, with whom we were then at war: and, though in the judgment of all parties it was not a time for us to dictate our terms, we obtained ſuch, as, conſidering our diſtreſſes, it was highly our intereſt to accept.

By this time however, Mr. Fox had formed a coalition with Lord North, the adverſary to whom he had ſo lately been oppoſed, and whoſe removal from office he had conſidered as an object worthy to be attained even at the hazard of all the miſchief reſulting from an unremitting oppoſition to the meaſures of government during the progreſs of an extenſive and complicated war. The reſult was the condemnation of the peace, which, as it was ſaid at the time, Lord North had rendered neceſſary, and Mr. Fox had declared to be ſo. This was followed by the reſignation

tion of Lord Shelburne; and after much and evident reluctance on the part of the crown, it became neceſſary to admit them to the objects of their ambition on the ſecond of April, 1783. The period of their government was ſhort, but it was ſufficient to give the public ſome inſight into their ſyſtem. Their extravagant loan, their attempt to double the income of the P. of W. and finally, their project of veſting in certain individuals of their own body, by Mr. Fox's Bill, a degree of power and patronage, which would exceed, and might bid defiance to, that of the crown, were the expedients to which they reſorted, under a conſciouſneſs that they did not poſſeſs the confidence of their country. This laſt meaſure, while it alarmed the Sovereign for the ſafety of his rights in the keeping of ſuch ſervants, rouzed the indignation of the people againſt the Houſe of Commons, who had aſſiſted them with their ſupport. The bill failed in the Houſe of Lords, — and in its failure involved the diſgrace of its authors, who inſtead of obtaining the permanency of power they ſought for, were diſmiſſed from office; and, notwithſtanding their repeated attempts to force themſelves back into office, they ſtruggled in vain. The Parliament, which had ſupported them as well in this as in the other violent meaſures of their admini-

adminiſtration, to the neglect of other public concerns, which required their attention, were diſſolved on the twenty-fifth of March, 1784; an event which gave general ſatisfaction to the whole kingdom, who eagerly took this opportunity of ſhewing their ſentiments on the late tranſactions, by their marked rejection of thoſe who had ſuppported the meaſures of the late miniſtry.

The new Parliament met on the eighteenth of May following, and the people waited with a moſt anxious ſuſpenſe the reſult of their deliberations. Let us here take a view of the ſituation in which they found the country. The picture is gloomy; but in juſtice to thoſe who have delivered us out of that ſituation we ought not to forget it.

The party-ſpirit which had been fomented during the oppoſition to Lord North's government, the frequent changes which had happened ſince that period, and the ſtruggles with which they had been attended, had ſo unſettled the minds of men, that the country had been in one continual ferment, which had not yet even begun to ſubſide; and, as people ſtill looked forward to freſh changes, no termination could yet be expected to ſuch an evil. The remedy would

would depend on the eſtabliſhment of a wiſe and temperate adminiſtration, rooted in the good opinion of the king and people, and poſſeſſing the confidence and ſupport of both, ſo as to put an end to thoſe projects of ambition, which had bred continual diſburbances, and kept the kingdom in a ſtate of fluctuation and ſuſpenſe, ſo detrimental to its intereſts, and dangerous to its ſafety.

The Eaſt India territories were repreſented to be in ſuch a ſtate of diſorder, and the finances of the Company in a ſituation ſo deſperate, that it was at that time declared ſcarcely practicable to ſave the one from anarchy, and the other from bankruptcy. The ſubject had ſeveral times been recommended to the conſideration of Parliament, in ſpeeches from the throne: but this recommendation had only led to the production of a project of ambition, which, if it had paſſed, would itſelf have been a greater evil than any of thoſe which it affected to remedy. Subſequent to the defeat of that violent meaſure, the ſubject had indeed undergone ſome diſcuſſion; but the temper of the Houſe was ſuch, that it could not be brought to any ſatisfactory iſſue. The main buſineſs therefore, of applying an adequate, and at the ſame time a conſtitutional remedy

to

to the affairs of the Eaſt Indies, remained for the new Parliament

The war, which we had undertaken in purſuit of a revenue from America, had led us into a ſyſtem of borrowing, which mortgaged every advantage that could be propoſed to us from ſucceſs. In addition therefore to our loſs of reſources by the ſeparation of the empire, we found ourſelves loaded with an increaſe of debt ſo enormous, that notwithſtanding the heavy burthens which had been yearly impoſed, we had not yet been able to provide even for the payment of its annual intereſt; moſt of the new taxes impoſed by Lord North proving very deficient, and a conſiderable unfunded debt ſtill remaining without any proviſion.

Our commerce had ſuffered ſo much by the long continuance of the war, and the preſſure of increaſing taxes, that its animation remained, as it were, ſuſpended, and it required a foſtering hand, in any degree to reſtore it to health and vigour. While therefore the ſituation of the finances required further taxes, care was neceſſary that they ſhould not bear upon commerce in its then feeble ſtate; and regulations were neceſſary for the encouragement of

of trade, without leſſening our revenues, which would not admit of diminution.

The high rank and ſtation which this country had always preſerved among the powers of Europe, had been utterly loſt amid the diſtreſſes we had ſuffered, and the degradation we had undergone. Even thoſe who had formerly courted us, not merely as faithful allies, but as powerful protectors, appeared now forward to join the general combination againſt us, and inſult over our imbecility. It was therefore become important, not only to our national honour, but even to our national ſecurity, to raiſe the country from that ſtate of utter abandonment and neglect, into which it had fallen, and to recover its conſequence among foreign nations: a work of particular difficulty, as, excluſive of the natural impediments ariſing from our diſtreſſed and helpleſs ſituation, we had to encounter the prejudices of foreign powers againſt us, from the humiliation which we had ſuffered in the eyes of Europe.

Such was the ſituation in which the country was delivered over by the former parliament to the new body of repreſentatives. The proſpect before them was ſuch as muſt have alarmed the moſt ſanguine, and damped the ſpirit of the moſt enterpriſing. By what means it has

ſince happened that we have not only ſurmounted every danger, but have become ſo proſperous at home, and reſpectable abroad, as almoſt to have loſt, within ſo ſhort a period, even the memory of our recent diſtreſſes, will appear on a review of the meaſures, which have been carried into effect ſince the meeting of the Parliament of 1784.

The affairs of INDIA, which had been the ſubject of ſo much contention in the late Houſe of Commons, and which had occaſioned the ſubſequent appeal made to the people, naturally became the firſt object of concern to the new Parliament. Here two principal evils preſented themſelves, for which it was their duty to provide.

Firſt, the miſgovernment of our territories in India, which had ſo recently engaged us in deſtructive and ruinous wars, and which, by the ſyſtem of oppreſſion which was alleged to prevail, reflected diſhonour on the Britiſh name.

Secondly, the apprehended bankruptcy of the Company, in which the finances and credit of this kingdom would have been deeply involved.

I. The

I. The adminiſtration of the Company's government in India laboured under the imputation of waſte and oppreſſion, and was liable to all the objections, which naturally occur againſt intruſting political affairs of ſuch an extent to the excluſive management of a mercantile company: objections which were thought of ſufficient magnitude to juſtify, in the eyes of ſome men, the dangerous remedy of Mr. Fox's Bill — a remedy pretended to be for the reſtoration of the Company's affairs, and the better adminiſtration of their government; but felt to be a political expedient to maintain a party in government, againſt the wiſhes of the Crown, by ſecuring to them a degree of power and patronage, greater than that of the Crown itſelf. This meaſure having been happily rejected, it remained for the legiſlature to provide ſome other plan, founded on leſs obnoxious principles, and calculated to meet the urgency of the caſe.

Accordingly, one of the firſt meaſures of the Parliament of 1784, was to paſs a Bill for the better government of India. Whether this meaſure was objectionable on any other grounds, ſhall be enquired in a ſubſequent part of this diſcuſſion. But it muſt in the firſt place be obſerved, that it was at leaſt unqueſtionably

free from thoſe important objections which had been ſo ſucceſsfully urged againſt Mr. Fox's Bill, as being dangerous to our conſtitution at home. That the new bill differed from Mr. Fox's in that reſpect, was indeed admitted at the time, even by thoſe who argued moſt againſt its alledged weakneſs and inefficacy. A contrary aſſertion has lately been advanced, and an attempt has been made to ſupport it by what was called *a Comparative Statement of the two Bills*. That pamphlet cannot however be conſidered as a ſerious argument in defence of a propoſition ſo palpably abſurd, but muſt in fairneſs rather be regarded as one of thoſe paradoxical diſputations, which are ſometimes maintained for the purpoſe of diſplaying ingenuity, by men who are diſpoſed to think very highly of their own talents, and very meanly of the underſtanding of the reſt of mankind.

Mr. Fox's Bill was objected againſt as a violent and unjuſtifiable breach of the Charter of the Eaſt India Company, becauſe it deprived them, without their conſent, of the rights of which they were legally poſſeſſed, and this without even a pretence of neceſſity; as it took from them not only every ſpecies of interference in the political or territorial government of India, but alſo all ſhare in the direction

tion of their trade, the very object for which their charter was originally granted.

The preſent Bill was grounded on principles expreſly aſſented to by the Company. It eſtabliſhed that ſuperintendence over their political government abroad, which for the ſake of this country and of India, was agreed on all hands to be neceſſary; but it left to the Company the excluſive and uncontrouled management of their commerce.

Mr. Fox's Bill was alledged to erect a new branch of executive government, diſtinct from the Crown, and paramount to it; becauſe the commiſſioners, in whom the whole management of the Eaſt India Company's affairs was excluſively veſted by the Bill, were named in Parliament, were appointed for a fixed term of years, and were not like other miniſters, reſponſible to the King for their conduct, or removeable by his authority.

The preſent Bill gives to the Crown the power of appointing commiſſioners to ſuperintend the political government of India; and thoſe commiſſioners are like every other part of the executive government, removeable at the pleaſure of the Crown.

Mr.

Mr. Fox's Bill was univerſally believed to be calculated for the purpoſe of creating a corrupt influence in Parliament; becauſe it gave to his parliamentary commiſſioners the whole patronage of the Company, both at home and abroad, to the amount of above a million ſterling per annum.

The preſent Bill gives to the King's commiſſioners no patronage whatever, either at home or abroad.

Mr. Fox's Bill gave to a political party in this country, the abſolute and unreſtrained power of diſmiſſing at once all the Company's ſervants, both in England and in India, and of appointing any perſons to ſucceed them, without diſtinction or limitation of any ſort; and this was objected to, as opening an ample field for the abuſe of this patronage, to the purpoſes of faction and ambition.

The preſent Bill left the patronage in the hands of the Directors of the Eaſt India Company; a fluctuating body, not leagued together by principles of political party, or by objects of private ambition. It eſtabliſhed a ſyſtem of ſtrict œconomy, which has left no offices in that country, but ſuch as were found to be

be of abſolute neceſſity for carrying on the government there. And it impoſed many important reſtraints on the exerciſe of the remaining patronage, by which the means of abuſe in the hands of the Directors are greatly diminiſhed.

Till therefore Mr. Sheridan can perſuade the people of England that the conſent of a chartered body is of no moment, when a ſubſiſting charter is to be altered; that it is the ſame thing to take from a commercial company the management of their commerce, or to leave it excluſively to them; that the appointment of a permanent executive government, independent of the Crown, confers no greater or more laſting powers on the perſons ſo appointed, than when they are named by the Crown, and are removeable at the King's pleaſure like his other miniſters; that no more influence in Parliament can be acquired by an unlimited patronage of above a million ſterling per annum, than by no patronage at all: or laſtly, that patronage given without reſtraint to a political party is not more likely to be uſed for party purpoſes, than patronage left under great reſtraints in the hands of men not forming any political party: till, I ſay, Mr. Sheridan can eſtabliſh theſe propoſitions, the people of England will

probably continue to believe, that their repreſentatives, whom they choſe in 1784 for their avowed deteſtation of Mr. Fox's Bill, *did not*, within three months after their election, "paſs another bill reſembling it in all thoſe points on which their objections were principally grounded." And it may ſafely be aſſumed, that the new Parliament have ſo far at leaſt performed their duty, as conſiſted in avoiding the faults ſo juſtly imputable to their predeceſſors.

But this is not enough; if they have not provided effectually for the remedy of the then exiſting evils, or if the reproach which was made againſt the new Bill, at the time of its paſſing, by the partizans of the old Bill be true, that this Bill is wholly inefficient and inadequate to the objects which Parliament had in view.

The objects which Parliament had in view in paſſing this Bill appear to have been the three following: reſponſibility in the government at home; reformation of the ſyſtem of government abroad; and a mode of trial for offences committed in India.

To

To accompliſh the firſt of theſe objects, it was neceſſary that ſuch government ſhould form a part of the general executive government of the country, ſhould be ſubject to the appointment and removal of the Crown, ſhould be liable to the conſtant ſuperintendence of Parliament; and in thoſe matters which are not ſtrictly of a political nature, ſhould alſo be unable to conceal their proceedings from the Directors, who are in ſo many reſpects intereſted in a knowledge of them.

To theſe ends the Bill eſtabliſhed a board, with powers of ſuperintendence and controul over the affairs of India, conſiſting of ſix perſons, connected with the executive government for the time being, appointed under his Majeſty's commiſſion, and daily reſponſible to Parliament for every circumſtance in the execution of their office. No power is given to them to interfere with the commercial concerns of the Company; but the board has authority over their political affairs, ſo as to be enabled to ſecure their attention to thoſe ſettled maxims of government, on which all men are agreed the proſperity of that country depends.

The next object, that of reforming the ſyſtem in India, was accompliſhed by new modelling the conſtitution of the governments, and eſtabliſhing rules for the conduct of the Company's ſervants in India; rules, which ſhould tend to introduce a plan of œconomy, to preſerve the faith of treaties, to check all impolitic views of aggrandizement, to afford ſecurity to the landholders, and protection to the manufacturers: by lodging in the Governor and Council of Bengal an authority over the other governments; by making proviſions as well in favour of ſeveral of the princes of India, as of the Zemindars and other native landholders of that country; by directing a reviſal of the eſtabliſhments, a ſuppreſſion of uſeleſs places, and a ſucceſſion by ſeniority, together with a return to Parliament of the progreſs made in theſe reforms: and laſtly, by providing againſt ſuch evaſions of the laws, and ſuch extortions and mal-practices as were moſt prevalent in that country.

With regard to the third object, that of a judicature at home, for offences committed in India, experience had repeatedly pointed out the neceſſity of erecting a ſpecial tribunal for the purpoſe. Our ordinary courts of law had proved wholly inadequate to the caſes of Stratton

ton and of Rumbold. Nor does that mode of trial, which has ſince been reſorted to in the inſtance of a parliamentary impeachment, appear entitled to any preference over the other courts, in caſes of Indian delinquency. It would not perhaps be reaſonable to impute to the *mode* of proceeding *all* the delay which has ariſen; but, with every allowance on this ſcore, it may be doubted, whether this mode could have been made effectual, even in the moſt important caſes; and it is evidently inapplicable to thoſe which are leſs ſo. The Bill has therefore provided for this defect by eſtabliſhing a tribunal for offences committed in India, aſſimilated as nearly as poſſible to that palladium of Engliſh liberty—the trial by jury, and differing from it in minute forms only. To compoſe this tribunal, members are choſen from each Houſe of Parliament, by a ſpecies of ballot which gives a due ſhare of weight to all parties and deſcriptions of men. And out of this number are ſelected, partly by challenges and partly by lot, four Peers and ſix Commoners, to which are added three of the twelve Judges, one from each of the courts. Thoſe who are converſant in the principles of the Engliſh law, will at once ſee how every eſſential ingredient of a trial by jury is preſerved in this

eſtabliſhment; and, though it differs from it in ſome particulars of the mode of proceeding, ſuch as in their power of adjournment, and the unanimity of their verdict, it muſt be conſidered that theſe points have never been conſidered eſſential to the ſpirit of juries; and the variations are adapted to the nature of the cauſes which are to come before the court.

II. But whatever improvements may have been effected by this Bill in the adminiſtration of the Company's political affairs, yet the Parliament of 1784 will have but imperfectly performed their duty if they have not alſo attended to the Company's *finances*, ſo as to reſcue them from that danger of bankruptcy, which was repreſented hourly to threaten them.

A long and unſucceſsful war in India, the diſtreſſes of which were partly occaſioned by the ill policy of our government there, in provoking the native powers; and partly by the operation of European politics in our poſſeſſions in the Eaſt, in expoſing them to the united attacks of France and Holland, had exhauſted the finances of the Company abroad. The effects of the embarraſſment, thus originating in

in India, were ſoon ſeverely felt by them at home; their treaſury here, being drained, and their future income anticipated by the payment and acceptance of bills drawn upon them for the expences incurred by their governments abroad; and their reſources being almoſt annihilated by the diminution of their inveſtments, and the repeated capture of their ſhips.

The attainment of the peace relieved them from the latter of theſe difficulties; but left them burthened with a load of debt at home, which the profits of their trade afforded them no proſpect of diſcharging; and the revenues of India, abſorbed by the expences of the eſtabliſhments, which were ſtill kept up, appeared ſcarcely ſufficient to ſupport the credit of the government there, by the regular payment of the intereſt on its debts, and the gradual diſcharge of arrears to an indefinite amount, at the different ſettlements.

In December 1783, the Directors of the Eaſt India Company laid before the Houſe of Commons a ſtatement of their affairs at home and abroad, according to the lateſt advices then received.

But

But againſt this ſtatement it was urged by thoſe, who at that time endeavoured to depreciate the ſtate of the Company's affairs, that debts to a conſiderable amount exiſted, which were not brought forward, and that many of the articles included in the aſſets were not applicable to the diſcharge of the Company's debts; that others were greatly overrated; and that others, ſuch as the debts owing to the Company in India, amounting to between three and four millions, were of very doubtful realization, and ought not to be reckoned upon—And that taking theſe articles into conſideration, and allowing for them, there would exiſt an actual deficiency of ſeveral millions in the Company's affairs, which warranted the aſſertion of their being at that period in a ſtate of actual bankruptcy.

This was denied; but not by a denial of the exiſting deficiency; but on an aſſertion that the general ſituation of the Company, their trade, and their territorial revenues, would, by management and œconomy, enable them to meet and overcome all their difficulties, allowing even for conſiderable further demands in India beyond what then appeared.

In

In fact there were debts to a great extent, which came forward when the accounts of the army, &c. came to be adjuſted, and the large amount of arrears incurred put in a train for liquidation. But thoſe accounts were not ſufficiently diſtinct to aſcertain the preciſe amount due at the dates to which the ſtatement of 1783 was computed.

Indeed at this period the orders from home were frequently diſregarded; contentions ſubſiſted between the different ſettlements; the controuling power of the Bengal Government was diſputed by that of the other ſettlements, and criminations reſpecting the wars they were engaged in were alternately made againſt each other: hence the expences of particular detachments were thrown from one ſettlement to another, and not brought forward by either; it will therefore be in vain to look for accuracy in any of the ſtatements made up at that time; nor was it till the interference of the Parliament of 1784 had remedied theſe diſorders, and eſtabliſhed regularity in the proceedings of the Indian Governments, that the actual ſtate of the Company's affairs there could be aſcertained with preciſion.

The

The information of the peace in Europe did not arrive in India till the month of June, 1783, and it was not earlier than March 1784, that peace was concluded with Tippoo Saib; and, as the new adminiſtration of the Company's affairs at home, under the ſuperintendence of the Board of Controul, was not eſtabliſhed till Auguſt 1784, it was a conſiderable time after peace was eſtabliſhed, before the arrangements ordered, and the œconomical ſyſtem adopted at home, could operate with effect.

It appears from the accounts before Parliament, that in the year 1786 the ſtate of the Company's affairs was as follows:

Debts at home	—	£11,882,625.
Effects ditto, ditto	—	— £10,335,776.
Balance againſt the Company at home	— — —	£1,546,849.
Excluſive of the capital ſtock to the proprietors of	— —	£3,200,000.
Abroad.		
Debts in India	— —	£9,618,231.
China	— — —	£510,841.
		£10,129,072.

Effects

Effects in India —	£5,101,661.
China — — —	£203,640.
	£5,305,301.
Balance againſt the Company abroad — —	£4,823,771.

So that, on the whole, there appeared a balance againſt the Company, in 1786, of no leſs than £6,370,620. excluſive of the capital ſtock to the proprietors.

The effect of the meaſures, however, which had been already adopted, and now began to be felt, was ſuch as to enable the Company to meet theſe difficulties, and in the courſe of four years to pay off debts at home, to the amount of — £4,572,386.

And abroad, to the amount of £1,137,651.

£5,710,037.

And this in addition to the payment of the current demands of their trade, and the increaſe of their trading capital, which is greatly augmented by the Commutation Act, and alſo in addition to many extraordinary expences abroad, beyond their ordinary eſtabliſhments.

It is true, that for this purpoſe they have been authoriſed by Parliament (not "to re-

ceive aid from the public finances," as was aſſerted, in 1783, to be neceſſary, and was urged as one of the grounds which gave Parliament a right to ſeize their whole affairs into its hands), but to uſe their own credit by iſſuing new bonds to the amount of £1,034,000.
By money borrowed of the Bank £100,000.
And by new ſtock ſold — £2,980,000.

£4,114,000.

Above half of which is abſorbed in the additional ſums inveſted in trading property.

While they have been doing this, the confidence of the public in their affairs has gradually increaſed; their ſtock, which in December 1783 was worth only 120 *per cent.* in March 1790, was worth 174 *per cent.* Their bonds, which in December 1783 bore an intereſt of 5 *per cent.* and were ſold at £4. diſcount; in March 1790 bore only 4 *per cent.* intereſt, and ſold at £5. 17s. premium; and their paper in Bengal, which in 1785 bore a diſcount of 20 *per cent.* and upwards, is now negociated at a premium. And on the whole, conſidering the increaſe of their property, and the diminution of their debts, it appears by the ſtatements which have at different times been laid before Parliament, that the affairs of the Company

pany were above £4,000,000 ſterling better in March 1790, than in 1786. And at this time, when the Parliament is, as it were, to render a ſort of account of the affairs of this bankrupt Company, they deliver over to their ſucceſſors a body enjoying a clear ſurplus revenue in India of £1,140,000 *per annum*, after paying their whole civil, military, and commercial eſtabliſhments, the intereſt of all their debts there, and of thoſe which have been tranſferred home, together with the expences incurred for recruits; fees to officers, &c. in England, and poſſeſſing a trade, which, after paying upwards of £950,000 *per annum* to Government for cuſtoms and duties, yields them a profit of £540,000 *per annum*.

Thus it has happened, that a vaſt continent has been ſubjected to the controul of this kingdom, without the ſmalleſt injury to the Britiſh conſtitution; and the finances of a great Company, cloſely interwoven with thoſe of the nation, inſtead of holding out to the public the dangers of bankruptcy, have been ſo regulated as to be a means of addition to the general reſources of the empire.

FINANCE.

THE ſecond point, that of the general ſtate of the NATIONAL FINANCES, is of ſtill more importance than even what relates to India; and is one which was equally an object of peculiar attention and anxiety, at the opening of the preſent Parliament, and which has in an equal degree, almoſt ever ſince, divided the opinions of the leading political parties in the country.

The inſufficiency of the exiſting revenue to meet the burdens which the war had entailed upon the country, the failure of the taxes which had been impoſed to defray the intereſt of ſucceſſive loans; the alarming and increaſing progreſs of ſmuggling; the decay of trade and manufactures; the ſcarcity of money, and the conſequent check to enterpriſe and induſtry; the immenſe accumulation of debt, and the low ſtate of public credit, had produced a degree of apprehenſion and deſpondency, greater than perhaps ever before exiſted in this country.

The new Parliament, however, from its commencement, held out to the people, a determined intention to meet fully the public

embarraſſments, and endeavoured to raiſe an opinion, that the reſources of the nation, properly applied, would ſtill be equal to every exigency, and would gradually afford the means of eſtabliſhing a ſyſtem for the reduction of the national debt, which was conſidered as indiſpenſably neceſſary for the credit and ſecurity of the country.

In theſe general principles even the Oppoſition profeſſed to concur; and they not only took every opportunity of repreſenting the neceſſity of taking effectual meaſures, without loſs of time, for realizing this proſpect; but, during all the ſtruggle preceding the diſſolution of the former Parliament, they had dwelt upon it as the moſt urgent motive for the ſpeedy eſtabliſhment of a ſtrong and active adminiſtration.

Very early, however, in the new Parliament, they began to ſhew that difference of opinion, which they have uniformly maintained, and that ſpirit of oppoſition which they have conſtantly ſhewn to almoſt all the particular meaſures, which have been propoſed by Government, for the improvement of the finances. And though they have continued to maintain the neceſſity of a ſinking fund, yet in every ſeſſion, from that of 1786 to the preſent, they have conſtantly denied the ſufficiency of the reſources provided for that purpoſe, and have uniformly controverted the

ſtatement

ſtatement made of the exiſting or expected improvement in the revenue, and of the progreſs made towards the reduction of the public debt.

In order to aſcertain in the cleareſt manner a point of ſuch peculiar importance, and that the Public may be the better enabled to decide upon a queſtion, in itſelf ſo intereſting, and which has been productive of ſo much difference of opinion and diſpute between the two contending parties, I will proceed to ſtate what the ſituation of this country was with reſpect to her Finances at the cloſe of the year 1783, and what it is at the preſent moment.

The total annual produce of all the taxes (except the Land and Malt), including thoſe taxes which were raiſed to defray the expence of the Loan of 1783, together with certain duties due from the Eaſt India Company in the courſe of that year, amounted at the beginning of the year 1784, to £10,359,000.

The annual intereſt and charges of the Funded Debt amounted at that time to £8,053,072. and a large unfunded debt, conſiſting of Navy Bills and Ordnance Debentures remained to be provided for, which, when it was afterwards funded, created an addition

dition to the annual intereſt of £1,213,000. The expence of the peace eſtabliſhment, including £900,000 for the King's Civil Liſt, could not be eſtimated at leſs than about £5,200,000, making the total annual expence £14,466,072; to meet which, we had, as above ſtated, a revenue only of about £10,359,000. which, by the addition of Land and Malt, might amount to about £12,950,000 per ann. Beſides this deficiency, the war, though cloſed, had left behind it a long train of expence, with the proſpect of a variety of extraordinary demands for many years to come, and for which proviſion muſt be made: and the obtaining if poſſible a ſurplus fund for the reduction of the national debt, was a point the neceſſity of which was felt by every one, however little the ſtate of the finances appeared to juſtify a hope of its being accompliſhed.

Such was the ſituation of affairs when the Parliament of 1784 were called upon to retrieve the Finances of their country; and at a time when the means of carrying on the war were no longer to be found, and peace had on that account been declared to be indiſpenſibly neceſſary; when the reſources of the country appeared to be almoſt exhauſted; when the ingenuity of former miniſters had been ſtretched to its utmoſt extent, and every object of taxation

tion ſeemed pre-occupied, they ſucceeded in the courſe of the years 1784 and 1785, in ſupplying the large deficiencies of the former taxes, in providing funds for the payment of intereſt on freſh loans of ſix millions, which it was found neceſſary to borrow in the year 1784, and of one million which was required for the year 1785, and for liquidating the greateſt part of the unfunded debt, to the amount of near £18,000,000. Having ſurmounted theſe difficulties, and having furniſhed the means for the regular payment of the intereſt on the public debt, their next object was to deviſe ſuch a plan as ſhould ſeem moſt practicable and moſt effectual for the gradual reduction of the debt itſelf; and for this purpoſe a Committee of the Houſe of Commons was appointed, in the year 1786, to examine and ſtate the ſeveral accounts which had been laid before Parliament, relating to the public income and expenditure, and to report their opinion to the Houſe.

The difficulty of aſcertaining with preciſion what the probable amount of the future income of the country was likely to be, was pointed out by the Committee in their report to the Houſe. The ſame difficulty occurred in calculating the future annual expenditure. Judging, however, of the future produce of the old

old taxes by that of the preceding year, and eſtimating, as far as they were able, the probable amount of thoſe taxes which had been newly impoſed, the Committee ſtated their opinion to be, that the future annual income of the country might reaſonably be expected to amount to about £15,400,000, to which ſum it had been raiſed in the ſhort ſpace of little more than two years, from being, as is ſtated above, leſs than £13,000,000. With reſpect to the expenditure, they foreſaw that many extraordinary demands (the conſequences of the war) were likely to ariſe in the courſe of each year for ſome time to come, beyond the computed annual expence of a permanent peace eſtabliſhment: But they ſtated their expectation, that when thoſe extraordinary expences were defrayed, the current annual expenditure, *viz.* the intereſt and charges of the National Debt, the King's Civil Liſt, the Eſtabliſhments of the Navy, Army, and Ordnance, and other miſcellaneous ſervices, would not exceed a ſum of about £14,500,000. The balance between the income and expenditure, according to this ſtatement, left a ſurplus of £900,000 per annum, in favour of the former; and in the ſame ſeſſion, the Chancellor of the Exchequer propoſed to Parliament to raiſe new taxes to the amount of £100,000 per annum. The ſurplus being thus increaſed to One Million annually, this ſum was appropriated to the

purchaſe of ſtock on account of the public, by Commiſſioners appointed for that purpoſe. A regular and permanent ſyſtem was thereby eſtabliſhed for the gradual reduction of the national debt.

The grounds on which the late Parliament acted in this inſtance, were the ſubject of much diſcuſſion and diſpute between the different parties in the Houſe. The Oppoſition aſſerted in the year 1786, and have perſiſted in maintaining their propoſition in each ſeſſion, that the ſtatement of the Committee, both with reſpect to the income and expenditure, was fallacious; that there was no reaſonable ground to hope that the income would amount to the ſum it was eſtimated at; and that the expenditure would not admit of the propoſed reduction. They agreed, however, in the propriety of making proviſion for the payment of the national debt, but urged the neceſſity of impoſing conſiderable additional taxes on the people; a meaſure, which though certainly it muſt have been reſorted to, if it had become neceſſary, the patriotiſm of that Parliament did not allow them to adopt on light or unſubſtantiated grounds.

The accounts preſented to Parliament in the laſt ſeſſion, have now brought the diſputed queſtion,

queſtion, ſo far as relates to the income of the country, fairly to iſſue, and have juſtified the wiſe forbearance of Parliament, and their reluctance to load their country with unneceſſary burthens. By theſe accounts it appears, that the total produce of the taxes (including the land and malt) between the 5th of April, 1789, and the 5th of April, 1790, amounted to no leſs than £ 16,345,000; and that the average produce of the laſt three years, from the 5th of April, 1787, to the 5th of April, 1790, amounted to £ 15,846,000, which exceeds the ſum ſtated in the report of the Committee (after allowing for the amount of the new taxes raiſed in 1786) in no leſs than £ 349,000 per annum.

The amount of the future peace expenditure muſt ſtill remain uncertain, till the period arrives at which it was expected to take place, and till Parliament ſhall then, on a deliberate review of our ſituation, decide on the amount of the ſeveral eſtabliſhments to be maintained to meet the different exigencies of the public ſervice. The augmentation which has been made ſince 1786, in the number of ſeamen kept in peace, and of the troops maintained for the ſecurity of our Eaſt and Weſt Indian poſſeſſions, if it ſhould be continued, muſt evidently increaſe

our expence beyond what was calculated for a ſmaller eſtabliſhment. The wiſdom of that augmentation is certainly ſufficiently apparent in the preſent moment; but whether it ſhould be permanent, is a queſtion which our future Repreſentatives muſt decide. It may poſſibly be found difficult to reduce ſome other expences to the preciſe level of the eſtimate formed in 1786; but it is no inconſiderable matter of ſatisfaction to the country, to ſee, from the preceding ſtatements, that ſuch is the flouriſhing ſituation of our finances, that even if ſome increaſe ſhould unavoidably ariſe in the future annual expences of the country, an exceſs of income actually exiſts more than ſufficient to counterbalance it.

In addition to what has been ſaid on the ſubject of our annual income and expenditure, it is material to remark, that ſince the commencement of the year 1786, various extraordinary demands have been ſupplied on account of different public ſervices; and particularly from the unexampled liberality by which the laſt Parliament has ſo much diſtinguiſhed itſelf towards the American ſufferers. Theſe have amounted in the whole to more than £ 6,000,000. beſides the amount of capital of funded debt which has already been annihilated by the

operation of the ſinking fund, and which is no leſs than £ 5,184,000.

The whole of this has been done with the aſſiſtance only of about £ 400,000 increaſe of navy debt, and of a loan of one million, the greater part of which was rendered neceſſary by the expences of the armament in 1787, by which Holland was detached from France, and by the payment of the debts of the P. of W.

The meaſures by which this great alteration in the ſituation of our finances has been produced, have been ſo much the object of public attention, that it can hardly be neceſſary to enter into any detailed explanation of them.

The moſt material of them, are thoſe which were adapted to the ſuppreſſion of an illicit commerce, which had riſen to ſuch a heighth as to endanger almoſt the exiſtence of all revenue, and even in many parts of the kingdom to bear the appearance rather of open reſiſtance to the laws, than of a fraudulent evaſion of them. This was ſtated in the report of a Committee of the Houſe of Commons, previous to the diſſolution in 1784; but till after the meeting of the Parliament then choſen,

no

no meaſures were taken for remedying ſo alarming an evil.

The ſucceſs of the ſteps ſince adopted for that purpoſe, is notorious to all the kingdom, nor is there any individual in it whoſe perſonal obſervation will not enable him to bear teſtimony to the merit of the Parliament of 1784, on this ſubject. By lowering the duties on tea, and on ſpirits, the principal temptation of the ſmuggler has been removed, while by the ſubſidiary regulations and additional duties which accompanied thoſe meaſures, and by the increaſe of the legal conſumption, the revenue was ſecured from loſs, and the public burthens became more equally diſtributed among thoſe who were beſt able to bear them, inſtead of falling with diſproportioned hardſhip on thoſe whoſe obedience to the laws of their country, prevented them from making themſelves parties to fraudulent practices.

The ſame object has further been ſecured by extending the proviſions of the exciſe laws to the articles of wine and tobacco. By the former, ſo great an effect has been produced, that the legal conſumption has been more than doubled, and the duties now collected on wines amount to a larger ſum than they did previous to the French treaty, notwithſtanding

ſtanding that in conſequence of that treaty the rate of duty was reduced in ſome inſtances one-third, and in ſome one-half of its former amount, as the compenſation for the admiſſion of all our manufactures under moderate duties into the ports of France. So that this great advantage to our manufacturers and merchants, has been ſecured without its occaſioning a diminution of revenue.

There has not as yet been ſufficient time to aſcertain with accuracy the effects of the extenſion of exciſe to tobacco. But as far as can be collected from the experience of a few months, as laid before Parliament in the laſt ſeſſion, and from the acknowledged prevalence of the frauds againſt the revenue, in that article, there is every reaſon to hope that the greateſt advantages will be derived from that meaſure.

In theſe inſtances, where the exciſe was evidently more applicable to the due collection of the revenue, than any other ſyſtem, this mode has been reſorted to, and has been ſucceſsful. In other caſes, a diſpoſition has been ſhewn to remove thoſe articles which would admit it, from the management of that branch of revenue. On this principle the taxes on ſervants, and ſome other duties of a ſimilar

ſimilar nature, (for the collection of which many thouſand perſons were before ſubjected to the controul of the exciſe) were transferred to the head of aſſeſſed duties; and here, too, the experiment has been ſucceſsful, as the duties have under the new mode been more accurately collected. The conduct of the Parliament was guided in both caſes, not by an unmeaning clamour againſt the name of exciſe, which, if any weight at all were given to it, would apply with equal force to the annihilation of ſix millions of revenue; but by a conſiderate and attentive examination of thoſe articles which could with ſafety be placed under a different management, and of thoſe where the ſame object which juſtified the impoſition of taxes, equally juſtifies and requires that the duties, when impoſed, ſhould be placed under the exciſe, as the only effectual mode of enſuring their due collection.

It would be too long to inveſtigate a variety of other particulars; it is ſufficient to refer to the beneficial effects of the French Treaty, as conſidered with a view to revenue only; to the Conſolidation of the Cuſtoms, a meaſure approved by all parties and deſcriptions of men; to the new regulations for the collection of various taxes, and to that unremitting attention given by the late Parliament to thoſe minute details

details on which a ſyſtem of revenue muſt always ſo much depend. The mode in which loans and other money tranſactions have been conducted, on the principle of open competition, deſerves, however, to be particularly mentioned, becauſe its advantages are not confined to the benefit ariſing from it to our finances, but are productive of more important conſequences to the honor and independence of Parliament, as muſt be felt by every man who recollects what paſſed on the ſubject of loans engaged for in ſecret, during the courſe of the laſt war. It is alſo material to advert to the very great amount of extraordinary reſources which have been brought forward by the vigilance of Parliament, in aid of the public exigencies; becauſe it is of importance to obſerve, that a great part of this aid ariſes from the ſalutary proviſions which they have made for the examination of the public accounts, in a more expeditious, and at the ſame time a more accurate manner than before prevailed; and for the ſteps taken, in conformity to the ſame principle, for bringing up arrears, and enforcing the punctual payment of taxes. It will hardly be conceived by any man who is not acquainted with the fact, that the office of auditing the public accounts was become an avowed ſinecure in the hands of thoſe who were nominally reſponſible for it; and that while the ſhelves of the public offices

were loaded, year after year, with freſh volumes of unexamined accounts, the balances of unaccounted millions were accumulating, with intereſt upon intereſt in the coffers of perſons indebted to the public.

This evil is now remedied; and the beneficial effects of what has been done in this reſpect, are not confined to the temporary aid which has been derived from it to our finances ſince 1784, but will be ſtill more ſtrongly felt, whenever the circumſtances of the country ſhall again place us in the ſituation of incurring the expences of war. Theſe can only be kept within bounds by an accurate and ſpeedy inveſtigation of accounts, and by that check which reſults from bringing the national expenditure forward into public view, inſtead of ſuffering it, as in the laſt war, to accumulate in balances, or to be concealed in an unfunded debt, of which no man could conjecture the extent.

On this ſubject of the national finances, it remains only to ſpeak of the plan eſtabliſhed for the gradual reduction of the national debt: and on this point, however important in itſelf, it is unneceſſary to dwell long, becauſe no difference of opinion has ever exiſted upon it. Some doubts were ſtated as to the poſſibility of carrying this plan into effect, without impoſing freſh burthens on the people; and even thoſe

doubts have been diſproved by the event. But no man has ever queſtioned the advantage which this country derives from the eſtabliſhment of the ſyſtem itſelf; and the merit of the particular regulations adopted for carrying it into execution, is ſufficiently obvious to any one who has at all conſidered them. What the effect has been of this wiſe and ſalutary meaſure, for the ſake of which the Parliament were content to riſk their popularity with their conſtituents;—how rapidly the public credit has ſince been re-eſtabliſhed, and the value of the funded property of the kingdom increaſed by nearly one half of the rate at which it ſtood in the beginning of 1784;—how ſtriking a contraſt the ſituation of this country forms in that reſpect, even with the leaſt embarraſſed of thoſe nations with whom ſhe has had to contend:—Theſe are points which are already deeply engraven on the mind of every man who is acquainted with the intereſts of his country, who knows the means by which we are become a proſperous nation, and the foundation on which our proſperity muſt reſt.

COMMERCE AND NAVIGATION.

HAVING thus gone through the detail of the two former heads, we come to the third of the general diviſions ſtated in the commencement of this work.

The univerſal deſpondency on the ſubject of India, and the deſpair with which people looked at the embarraſſed ſtate of our finances, were hardly greater, or more diſtreſſing, than the diſcouragement which prevailed on the ſubject of our trade.

It had long been felt, that the conſequence of this country as a naval power, and our internal wealth and proſperity, depend on the flouriſhing ſtate of our Commerce, Navigation, and Manufactures.

The American war had indeed, for the laſt four years of its duration, been carried on chiefly on account of the fears entertained of the mortal blow which the ſeparation of the Colonies from Great Britain would give to our trade; and we had on this account perſiſted, long after our hopes of revenue from thence were abandoned.

When

When therefore this ſeparation at laſt took place, and when, to the loſs of intercourſe and connection with that country, was added the neceſſity of impoſing additional burthens in this, which fall in ſome degree on the neceſſaries of life, and thereby augment the price of labour, it is not to be wondered at that men ſhould have apprehended a very great deficiency in our trade, and ſhould have looked with deſpair to the ſituation of our commercial concerns.

This ſubject has therefore neceſſarily engaged a large ſhare of the attention of the Parliament of 1784, and of the Government whom they have ſupported.

The abolition of the Board of Trade and Plantations having been ſeverely felt by the trading intereſts, a ſeparate commercial department was now reſtored, and rendered an efficient branch of the public government, without trenching upon thoſe principles of œconomy which had occaſioned the abolition of the former Board; as none of the Members of the Committee of Privy Council, appointed for this ſervice, received any other ſalaries from the Crown than what they previouſly enjoyed in other departments of government.

The

The firſt general proof of the effects of the meaſures brought forward by this department, is the amount as ſtated in the Cuſtom-Houſe accounts, of our Imports and Exports for the year 1789, and of our Navigation at the commencement of that period, being the lateſt account which has appeared. The whole of our Imports was, in 1789, £17,828,887. which in 1783, at the cloſe of the war, was only £13,122,235. The whole of our Exports was in 1789 £18,513,030, and in 1783 only £14,756,818. And what makes this ſtatement the more ſtriking is, that of the increaſe of Exports, amounting in the whole to near four millions, above three millions ariſe from the great augmentation of Britiſh manufactures exported to all parts of the world. The number of veſſels belonging to the different ports of Great Britain, has increaſed from 8,342 in 1783, to 11,085 in 1788. The tonnage, from 669,221 tons in 1783, to 1,054,456 tons in 1788; and the number of ſailors from 59,004, to 83,286, during the ſame period.

Flattering however as this account is, it is, in many reſpects, leſs favourable to the improvement of the country than what would appear on a detailed examination of the particular branches of which it is compoſed.

The

The firſt great commercial queſtion which came under the conſideration of the Parliament of 1784, was, the Colony Trade with America. Under the old ſyſtem the States of America, being then our Colonies, had received great and peculiar benefit of trade from us; particularly the advantage of ſupplying our Weſt India Iſlands with materials for building, and with proviſions. They had alſo the advantage of ſending theſe bulky articles in American veſſels; a mode of carrying which was before the war annually increaſing, to the great detriment of Britiſh navigation, as neither the profit centered here, nor were the ſailors at our command, in caſe of emergency; nor was any encouragement given by it to ſhip-building in England, which is ſo eſſential a point to our maritime ſtrength.

The moſt ſtrenuous exertions were however uſed in 1784, for the continuance of this indulgence. And this point was much preſſed, both by the friends of the United States of America, and alſo by the Weſt India intereſt.

This was however reſiſted; and meaſures were taken, which, at the ſame time that they have ſecured to the Weſt India Iſlands a conſtant ſupply of neceſſaries from America at a reaſonable price, have greatly increaſed the navigation

navigation of this country. And this ſyſtem has ſtood the teſt of experience, and is now approved by every man in the kingdom who has any knowledge of our commercial intereſts. Other ſubſidiary meaſures have been adopted for the ſame purpoſe; particularly the Regiſter Act: and the following ſtatement of the decreaſe of foreign ſhipping, at a time when our own ſhipping has been rapidly increaſing, muſt afford the higheſt ſatisfaction to every true friend to this country.

		1783.	1788.
Cleared outwards	Britiſh Veſſels	7,329	12,936
	Foreign Do.	1,544	969
		8,873	13,905
Entered inwards	Britiſh Veſſels	7,690	11,121
	Foreign Do.	2,741	1,830
		10,431	12,951

And on the whole it may ſafely be ſtated, that the navigation of this country has at no period been in ſo flouriſhing and increaſing a ſtate as at preſent.

Theſe meaſures have been equally beneficial to our remaining Colonies, which have rapidly increaſed in population, wealth and commerce.

merce. The population of Quebec has increaſed nearly half of its former number; and the provinces of Nova Scotia and New Brunſwick, in a conſiderably greater proportion: Their exports to this country in 1783 were 91,000, and are now above 135,000. And as theſe Colonies are ſupplied from Great Britain, the amount which they conſume of Britiſh Manufactures muſt obviouſly be increaſed in the ſame or a greater proportion.

An equal degree of attention has been given to our European commerce. Beſides the conſtant negotiations which are known to have been carried on with other foreign nations, (and from which in ſeveral inſtances conſiderable benefit has been derived, though in ſome not ſo much as this country may have a right to claim and may ſtill hope for), the French treaty affords a ſtriking inſtance of beneficial arrangement. I cannot agree with thoſe who conſider this treaty as excluſively advantageous to England, and it muſt be the effect of a narrow policy to wiſh it to be ſo; but when we recollect the violent oppoſition given to this treaty, as deſtructive to our manufactures, it is impoſſible not to contraſt it with the actual effect produced by it, which has been ſuch that our export to France has increaſed from little more than £500,000, which

it was in 1786, immediately before the concluſion of the treaty, to £850,000 in 1789; and it is to be obſerved, that this extenſion of our commerce conſiſts principally in thoſe very articles of manufacture which we were ſo confidently told that the treaty was to annihilate.

The whole export of Britiſh merchandiſe to different parts of Europe in 1783, was 5,592,934; and in 1789 6,823,852. The increaſe of our cotton manufacture is known to every man who is the leaſt converſant with ſubjects of this ſort. It appears by the Cuſtom-Houſe accounts, that the whole amount of the cotton and mixed goods exported in 1783 was £787,462, and in 1789 £1,175,240. But it is to be obſerved, that theſe ſums are ſtated at the Cuſtom-Houſe valuation, which is far below the real value. It is ſuppoſed that the actual amount of theſe articles exported in 1789, is above two millions, and conſequently that the increaſe is in the ſame proportion greater than it appears from the ſums above ſtated. If theſe accounts ſhould appear in any degree imperfect, they are ſtrongly confirmed by the following ſtatement of the quantity of the raw material imported into this kingdom for the purpoſe of the manufacture.

COTTON WOOL.

		Pounds.
In 1783 the quantity imported was		9,723,805
In 1784	-	11,482,083
In 1785	-	18,400,384
In 1786	-	19,475,020
In 1787	-	23,250,268
In 1788	-	20,467,436
In 1789	-	32,576,023

The woollen manufacture cannot be ſtated from ſimilar documents, becauſe the raw material is the produce of our own country; but from an account of the number of cloths milled at the ſeveral fulling mills in the Weſt Riding of the county of York, it appears that in 1783 the quantity of broad cloth milled was 131,092 pieces, 4,563,376 yards. And in 1788, 139,406 pieces, 4,244,322 yards. And of narrow cloths, in 1783, 108,641 pieces, 3,292,002 yards; and in 1788, 132,143 pieces, 4,208,303 yards. And by the Cuſtom-Houſe accounts it appears that the value of woollen goods exported in 1783 was £3,494,506, and in 1789 £4,161,810. And this valuation is liable to the ſame remark as that of the cotton goods, being far below the real value.

The ſtate of the linen manufacture in Great Britain may partly be collected from the following account, which relates to Scotland, as it is well known that the Engliſh linen manufacture has increaſed in at leaſt as great a proportion.

From the 1ſt of November 1782, to the 1ſt of November 1783, the quantity of linen cloth ſtamped in Scotland amounted to 17,074,777 ¾ yards.

In 1788, to 20,506,310 ⅛ yards.

In 1789, to 19,996,075 yards.

It would be tedious to go through a ſimilar detail of all the articles. But the greateſt increaſe of all is in the article of iron, where our manufacture has had ſuch an extenſion, that notwithſtanding the immenſe quantity of the raw material now produced in this country, the importation of iron from foreign countries has increaſed from 47,911 tons in 1783, to 51,043 tonsi n1789.

This is the moſt valuable and the moſt rapidly increaſing of all our manufactures. It is an article abſolutely neceſſary for all the common uſes of life, and in which we poſſeſs great and peculiar advantages. Its ſale has been greatly facilitated by the French treaty; not

not only by our ſupplying the conſumption of twenty-four millions of inhabitants in France, but alſo by the additional means of acceſs to other markets, which we derive from the right of importation into this kingdom.

What has hitherto been ſtated relates chiefly to the export of our manufactures. Their total increaſe, including thoſe for home conſumption, is ſtill more difficult to be aſcertained.

It may however be ſtrikingly inferred from the following ſtatement: *viz.* That on an abſtract made from the Cuſtom-Houſe accounts, it appears that the whole amount of raw materials of manufacture imported into Great Britain in 1784, was about £3,800,000; and in 1789, 4,900,000; and that the whole amount of Britiſh merchandiſe exported in 1784, was £8,800,000; and in 1789, £13,400,000.

In addition to theſe accounts of the increaſe of our Navigation, our Commerce, and our Manufactures, there is another material article to be attended to; and this the rather, becauſe it is one to which the attention of the Parliament of 1789 has been turned with a peculiar degree of anxiety, as appears from the

the various laws that have paſſed for the encouragement of our fiſheries.

It was ſtated in the debates upon the laſt peace, by thoſe who oppoſed that wiſe and neceſſary meaſure, that the ſtipulation reſpecting Newfoundland had annihilated our fiſhery there, and in effect ſurrendered it to the French; and this, like other aſſertions of the ſame nature, was re-echoed in the publications of that party, and particularly in ſome of Lord Sheffield's pamphlets.

Immediately before the breaking out of the laſt war, when our Newfoundland fiſhery was at the higheſt, the whole number of ſhips and men employed, and the quantity of fiſh they brought to market, were as follows:

	Ships.	Men.	Quintals of fiſh.
1773 -	525	3,376	489,665
1774 -	533	4,281	516,358

In the year 1789, the number of ſhips employed is indeed leſs than in the two years above ſtated; but the tonnage of the ſhips in the former period is not ſtated ſo as to enable us to form a compariſon of the quantity of ſhipping employed. The number of men is much the ſame as in the largeſt of the two years, and

the

the quantity of fiſh conſiderably more, as appears by the following account:

	Ships.	Men.	Quintals of fiſh.
1789 -	472	4288	782,791

It is alſo well known, that during this period the French fiſhery at Newfoundland, inſtead of ſwallowing up the Britiſh, as was foretold, has been gradually decreaſing; while our's has, as appears above, equalled its amount in the moſt flouriſhing period, as to the number of perſons employed in it, and far exceeded it in the produce of their induſtry.

The tonnage of ſhips employed in the Greenland fiſhery, has increaſed from 14,000 tons, which was the amount in 1783, to 73,000 in 1788.

The proportionate increaſe of the Southern Whale Fiſhery has been conſiderably greater. In 1783, no more than 1,040 tons of ſhipping were employed in this adventurous and uſeful enterprize. In 1789 the tonnage was 9,880, and the value of their produce ſold for above £100,000.

To all theſe particulars attention has been paid by Parliament, and the ſucceſs has more than

than equalled the moſt ſanguine expectation that could be formed.

On the whole therefore it appears, that in the ſpace of a few years, our Navigation, our Commerce, our Manufactures and our Fiſheries, have been extended far beyond what they had ever been before. And that this has been done at a period and under circumſtances which had given riſe to the moſt alarming apprehenſions, even for the exiſtence of a great part of theſe aſtoniſhing ſources of wealth and power.

FOREIGN POLITICS.

HAVING thus examined the preſent condition of this Country with reſpect to thoſe points which are of moſt importance to its internal proſperity, it remains only to examine its relative ſituation, with reſpect to the other powers of Europe.

The importance of this part of our ſituation to the general intereſts of the empire, and even to our domeſtic ſecurity, is ſuch as no man can be ignorant of. It is in vain under the exiſting circumſtances of Europe, to ſuppoſe that this country can remain an unconcerned ſpectator of events which materially alter the ſituation of its neighbours, and which might in that caſe by our negligence afford to our rivals the means of deſtroying all the ſources of that proſperity which has ſo long been an object of jealouſy to them. It is equally true on the other hand, that our ſituation affords us the advantage of not being involved in every trifling and unimportant difference which may ariſe upon the Continent. The wiſdom of the government of this country conſiſts in obſerving a proper medium between theſe two extremes; and in proportion as this point has

been ſyſtematically purſued, or as it has fallen into neglect, the conſequence and ſecurity of the Britiſh nation has always increaſed or diminiſhed. It would perhaps be ſuperfluous now to enquire, by what fatality it was that at the commencement of the American war we were found without a ſingle ally; and that while every year brought ſome freſh acceſſion to the league, which during the progreſs of that war was combined againſt us, we were left to the laſt to maintain the ſtruggle, without any other aſſiſtance than the national vigour and reſources of the country, diſcouraged and crippled by ſo many concurring circumſtances. But without referring to the cauſes of this misfortune, the effects of it we have all felt, and muſt long remember. The united hoſtility of ſo many of the powers of Europe, and the more than ſuſpicious neutrality of the reſt, reduced us to the neceſſity of concluding a peace on terms of conceſſion and humiliation. And by a natural effect, theſe evils operated reciprocally the one upon the other; ſo that as our being deſtitute of allies was one principal cauſe of our loſſes during the war; ſo the condition to which we were reduced at the peace, was a diſcouragement to any power, even if any ſuch had exiſted, who was diſpoſed to connect its intereſts with thoſe of Great Britain.

Nor

Nor was our ſituation in this reſpect more ſtriking in any point of view, than when compared with that of France. The Court of Verſailles having repaired the diſgraces of a preceding war; having detached from this country our American Colonies; having ſecured to Spain an ample recompence for her interference; having brought Holland under a degree of influence, little ſhort of abſolute ſubjection; enjoyed the reputation of having given peace to Europe, and the advantage of being the arbiter of every difference which aroſe.

What our ſituation now is, in all theſe reſpects, it is hardly neceſſary to ſtate. The manner in which an opportunity was ſeized to regain our natural connection with Holland, and to form on that baſis an alliance of greater ſtrength than any ſyſtem which can be oppoſed to it, is freſh in the recollection of every one. The effect has been, that we are now united in the cloſeſt manner with the Dutch Republic, the only power who from its local advantages in India, might affect the ſecurity of our valuable intereſts in that quarter of the globe. In order to ſtrengthen this ſyſtem, to enable us as well to protect this valuable ally from the attacks of others, as to act with vigour and effect in all the different events which can preſent themſelves, by which our

intereſts in Europe can be affected, an alliance has alſo been made with the moſt conſiderable military power on the Continent. And ſuch has been the ſecurity and happineſs derived from this ſyſtem, to all the parties who compoſe it, that while every other power of Europe, has either been diſtracted with internal commotions, or has ſeen its finances waſted, and its reſources deſtroyed by the effects of Foreign wars, Great Britain and its allies alone have hitherto enjoyed the bleſſings of domeſtic and external tranquillity. And at the preſent moment, when the ſpirit of this country has been rouſed by an unprovoked attack on the deareſt of her rights, the freedom of her commerce, and the ſecurity of her navigation, we have abundant proof of the advantage of our actual ſituation, as compared with that defenceleſs and inſulated ſtate in which we found ourſelves during the whole of the laſt war. Againſt the aggreſſor in this inſtance, the reſources of this country, alone and unaſſiſted, might confidently be looked to as affording no unfavourable earneſt of ſucceſs, either by the way of negotiation, or by a vigorous exertion of our ſtrength in a juſt cauſe. But we have the ſatisfaction of ſeeing that we are not left to truſt to our own reſources alone: And that the efforts actually making in Holland, with a view to aſſiſt our efforts, are, in proportion to their ſtrength, little

little leſs active and effectual than the exertions which have already brought the Britiſh naval force to ſo conſiderable a ſtate of preparation. When, in addition to this, we reflect, that in the proſecution of ſuch a conteſt, we may alſo look to the aſſiſtance of Pruſſia, ſecured to us by the ſtipulations of our alliance, and by the common intereſts which unite us; it is impoſſible not to feel how much reaſon we have to value that ſyſtem which is of ſuch eſſential ſervice to us in the preſent inſtance.

CONCLUSION.

CONCLUSION.

SUCH is the happy change produced in the ſtate of this country, in the ſhort ſpace of ſix years, and during the continuance of one Parliament.—Abroad, we ſee India retrieved from ruin, our commerce extended even to a greater degree than before the American war; the country ſtrengthened and ſupported by powerful alliances, and reſtored in the eyes of foreign nations to its former importance. At home, the ſyſtem of government has been materially changed. The improper influence which had exiſted in the hands of Government having been deſtroyed in 1782, the ſupport which the Miniſter has obtained in Parliament ſince that period has been that of unbiaſſed opinion; and confidence founded on experience, inſtead of a ſervile and intereſted dependence. Under ſuch auſpices the national finances, from the exhauſted ſtate into which they were ſunk at the cloſe of the late war, have been reſtored to ſo flouriſhing a condition, as to produce at preſent a conſiderable annual ſurplus.

To give clear and ſatisfactory evidence of this proſperous change in the affairs of the country, and at the ſame time to point out in ſome meaſure the *immediate* means by which it was effected, has been the object of the

preceding pages. To what cauſe this proſperity is *ultimately* owing, it is unneceſſary to mention. Every one who is acquainted with the fact, will conſider it as the happy conſequence of a virtuous and able legiſlature, acting in ſupport of a wiſe and ſteady ſyſtem of government. And indeed, if from contemplating the general advantages which we have derived from the wiſdom of the late Parliament, we turn our eyes towards their conduct upon a particular critical occaſion, we ſhall find ſtill greater ſubject for our gratitude and admiration. When the Sovereign was rendered incapable of exerciſing the powers of his ſtation, and when there was, in the minds of moſt men, little probability of his being ever able to reſume them, the Miniſter found himſelf ſtill ſupported by the Repreſentatives of the People. They ſtood forward to defend the prerogatives of the Crown, and to diſplay their affection towards their Sovereign, and at a time when the patronage and power uſually attendant upon Royalty, and which might otherwiſe have been ſuppoſed to influence their conduct, were transferred into other hands; they faithfully diſcharged their duty, looking to no other reward than the conſciouſneſs of having performed it. Elected by the people for the purpoſe of giving ſupport to the Crown, in the juſt exerciſe of its lawful prerogative, they ſhewed by their ſubſequent conduct, the ſame ſteadineſs in

ſupport

ſupport of the claims of the two Houſes of Parliament, to act on behalf of the nation, and in defence of the Crown, when no longer able to exert its own prerogatives.

Under the direction of a Parliament thus diſintereſted in principles and conduct, the credit of the nation has been raiſed to its preſent flouriſhing condition; and it muſt be the wiſh of every true friend to his country, that ſucceeding Parliaments may cloſely imitate its example. In particular we muſt feel anxious, whilſt under the apprehenſion of approaching war, leſt our enemies ſhould be ſuffered to grow confident by any ſuch change in the legiſlature, as might prevent the continuance of that ſyſtem of government which has been of late adopted, and by which this country has been already placed on ſo formidable a footing. There can however be little doubt, but that thoſe men who are now returned to their conſtituents, will receive the reward of their patriotiſm, by being again honoured with the confidence of the people; ſince to thoſe only can we look with well-grounded hope for the continuance of the proſperity we enjoy, who have placed us in a ſituation in which we are enabled, in the language of His Majeſty's Speech, either to meet the exigencies of war, or to cultivate, with increaſing benefit, the bleſſings of peace.

THE END.